



Work Process Improvement

A Structured Approach

Innovative Growth Solutions

May, 2009

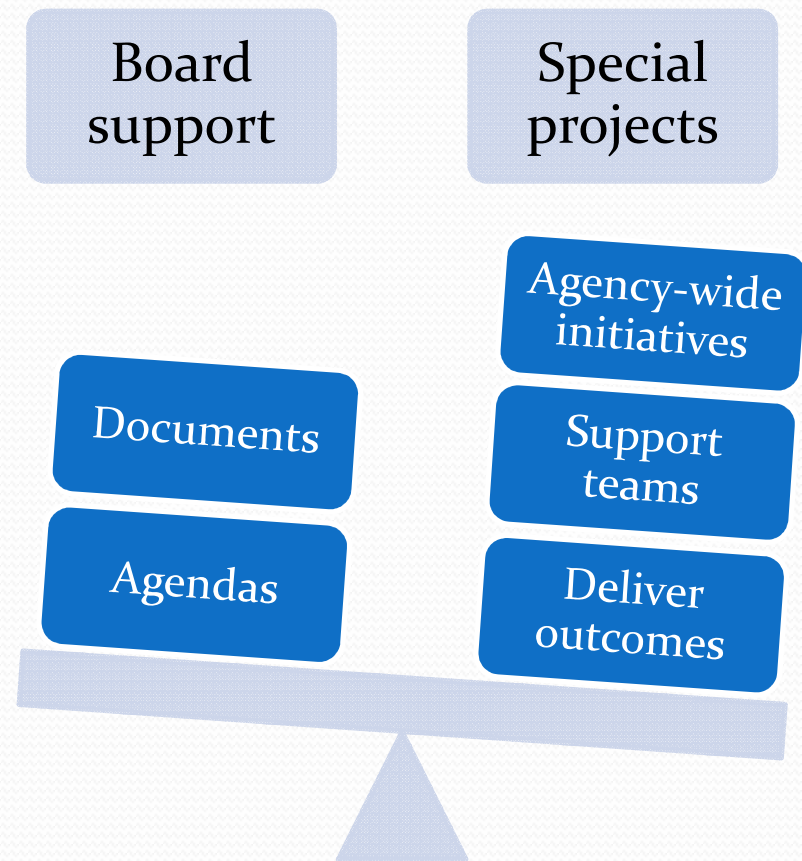


What is it?

- Process:
 - A series of steps and decisions that define how work is accomplished.
- Process Improvement:
 - A critical, objective analysis of those steps and decisions for the purpose of implementing changes to ensure a higher, measurable level of efficiency, quality, and customer satisfaction.

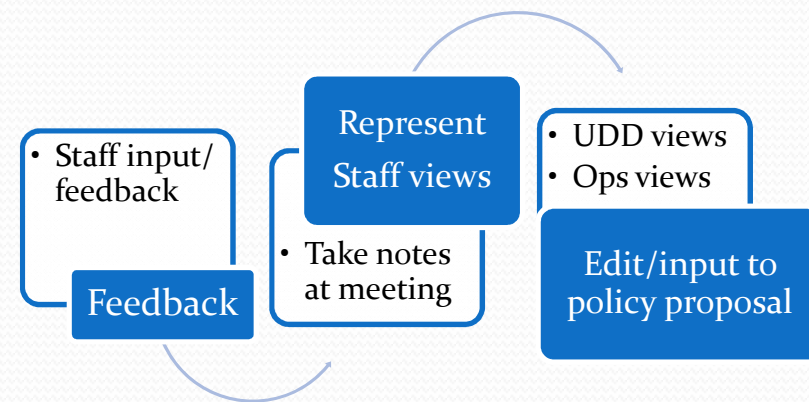
Major Steps and Components

1. Inventory
 - Major tasks/ processes
2. Criteria & Selection
3. Get stakeholder input
4. Develop success measures
5. Work Breakdown
6. Reconstruct processes
7. Test internally
8. Test with Stakeholders
9. Measure results of test
10. Implement



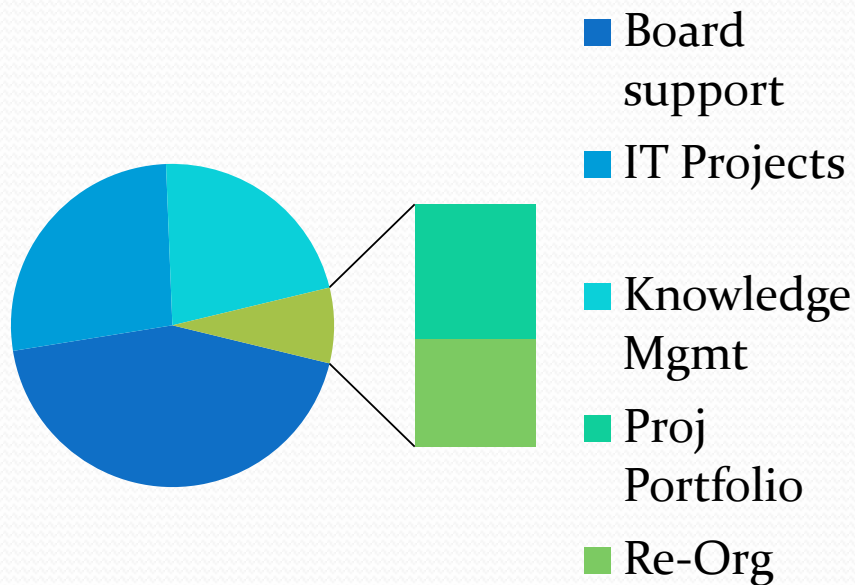
1. Inventory

- Identify and briefly describe major work processes
- Describe key attributes:
 - Time
 - Staff
 - Work products
 - Organizational outcomes/ business purpose
- Analyze at high level:
 - Which processes consume the most time?
 - Which are most complex?
 - Which affect the most staff?
 - Which most impact product/service?
 - Are there unnecessary tasks?
- Develop Work Process Improvement “Short List”



2. Develop and Apply Selection Criteria

Staff time by Activity



- Brainstorm key factors & measures to guide process selection, e.g.:
 - Potential staff time savings
 - Multiple staff involved vs. one/few staff
 - Service improvement potential
 - Risk of change
 - Complexity
 - Degree of control
- Evaluate “Short List”
- Select 1-3 candidates for improvement

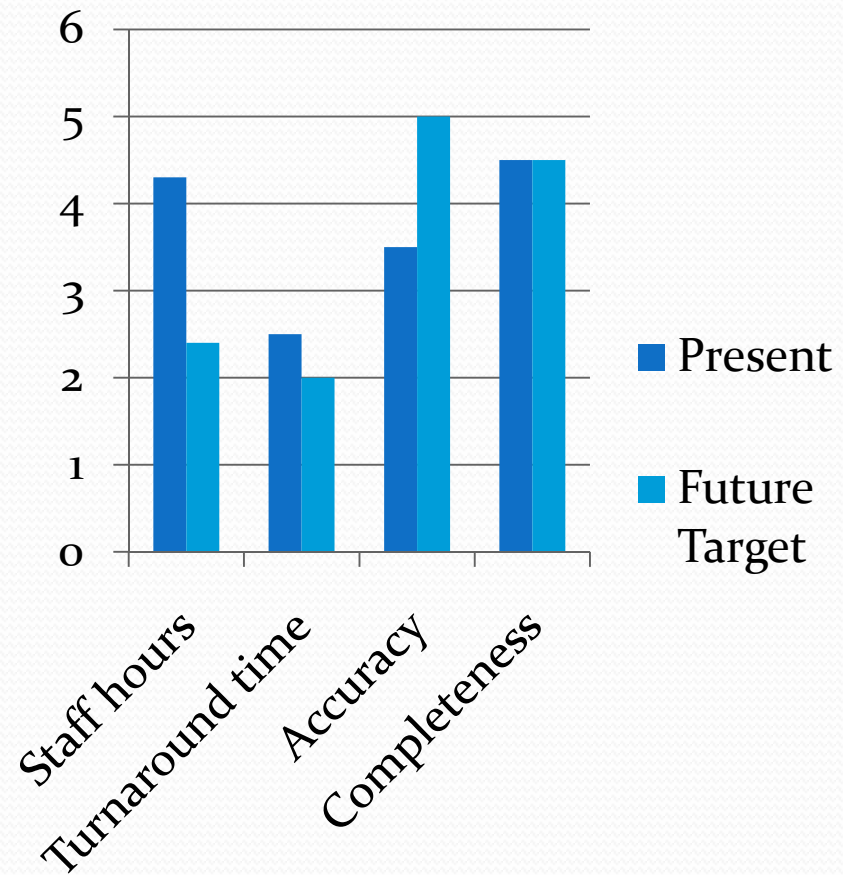
3. Stakeholder Input



- Involve stakeholders early and often:
 - Improves the chances of success
 - Improved customer satisfaction
- Involve stakeholders in selecting targets for WPI and in development of success measures
- Key questions:
 - Who is affected? i.e. who consumes your work product?
 - How satisfied are they with current service levels?
 - Where are the current gaps? (Timeliness, accuracy, etc.)
 - What would customers most like to see improved?
 - What does “improved service” mean for customers?
- Involve stakeholders in back-end testing/evaluation

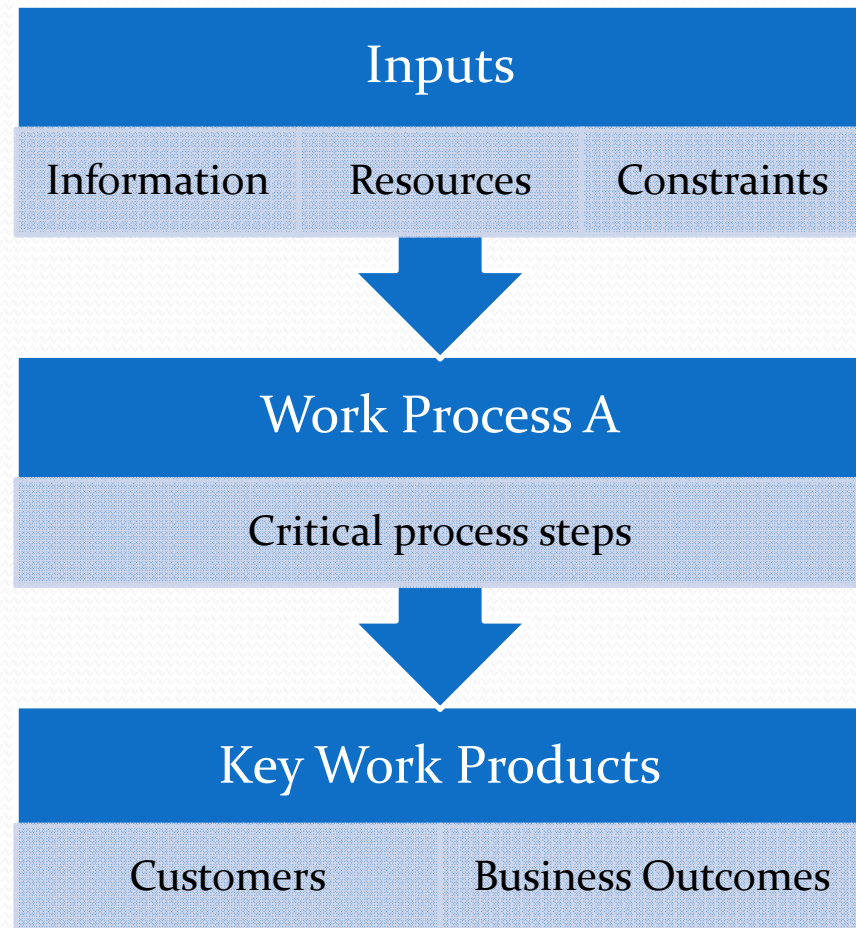
4. Develop Success Measures

- Develop success metrics in advance
- Simple and “SMART”
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Repeatable
 - Time-specific
- Measure process against metrics before making process changes
- Get stakeholder input on metrics, targets, & ratings



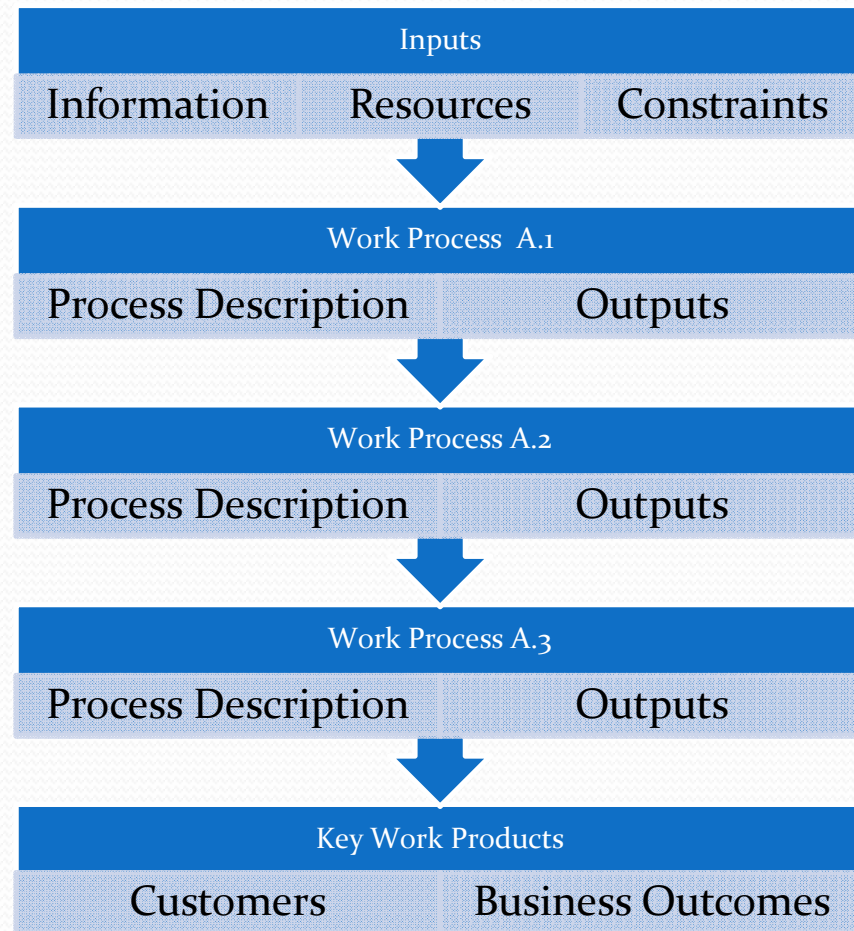
5. Work Breakdown – Step A

- This is the “meat” of the process
- Define key inputs and outputs/outcomes
- Start with high-level description of “transformation” – the process by which inputs are converted into key work products – major steps only



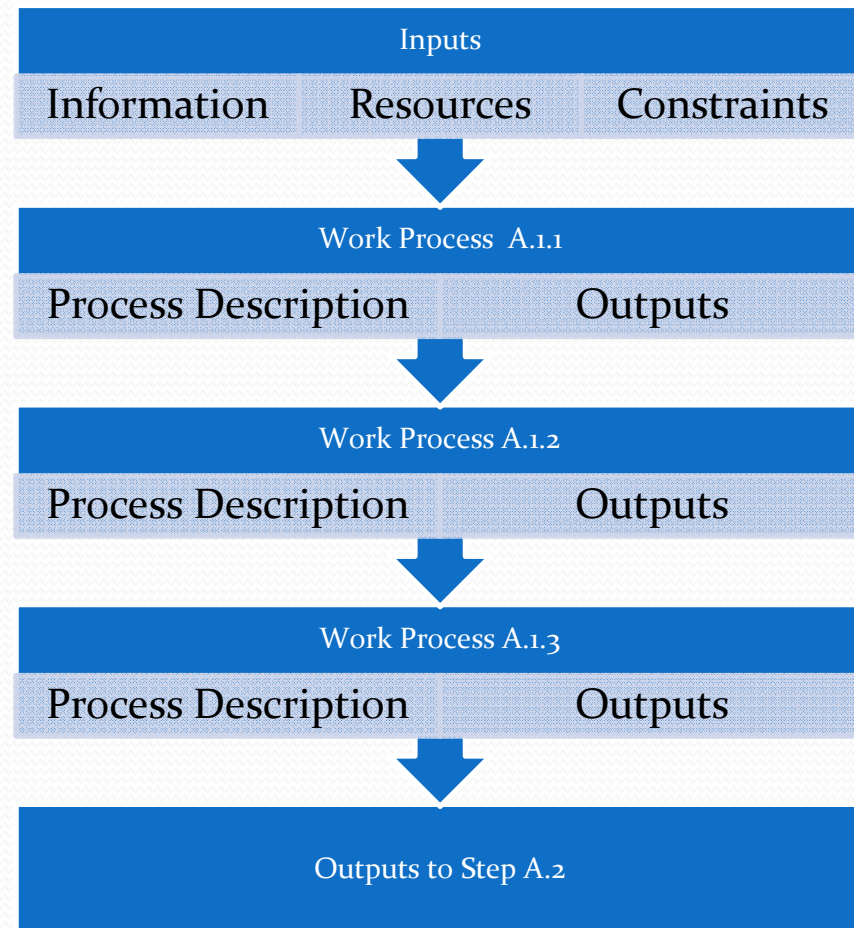
5. Work Breakdown – Step B

- Break the process into major component steps
- Define interim inputs/outputs
 - Note that External Inputs and Outputs remain the same
- Describe each step in “Structured English”



5. Work Breakdown – Step C

- Continue breaking process steps down until there are no further interim inputs/outputs
- Some steps may require more breakdowns
- Test: Can you reconstruct the process from the description?

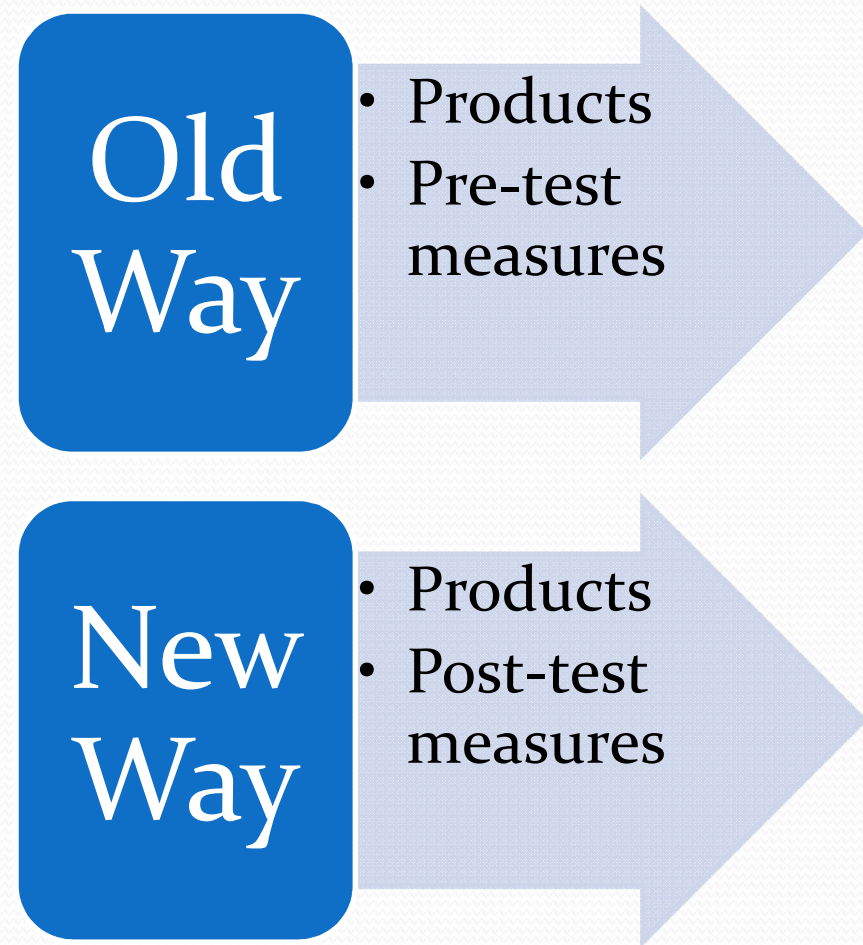


6. Reconstruct Processes

- Analyze the process:
 - Are there duplications?
 - What is the value of the steps?
 - Are there unnecessary steps/outputs?
 - Where do bottlenecks and breakdowns occur?
 - Are there opportunities for automation or streamlining?
- Brainstorm / research options to eliminate bottlenecks, and automate or eliminate repetitive steps
- Re-assemble the process using only the essential steps
 - draw shortest line from A to B

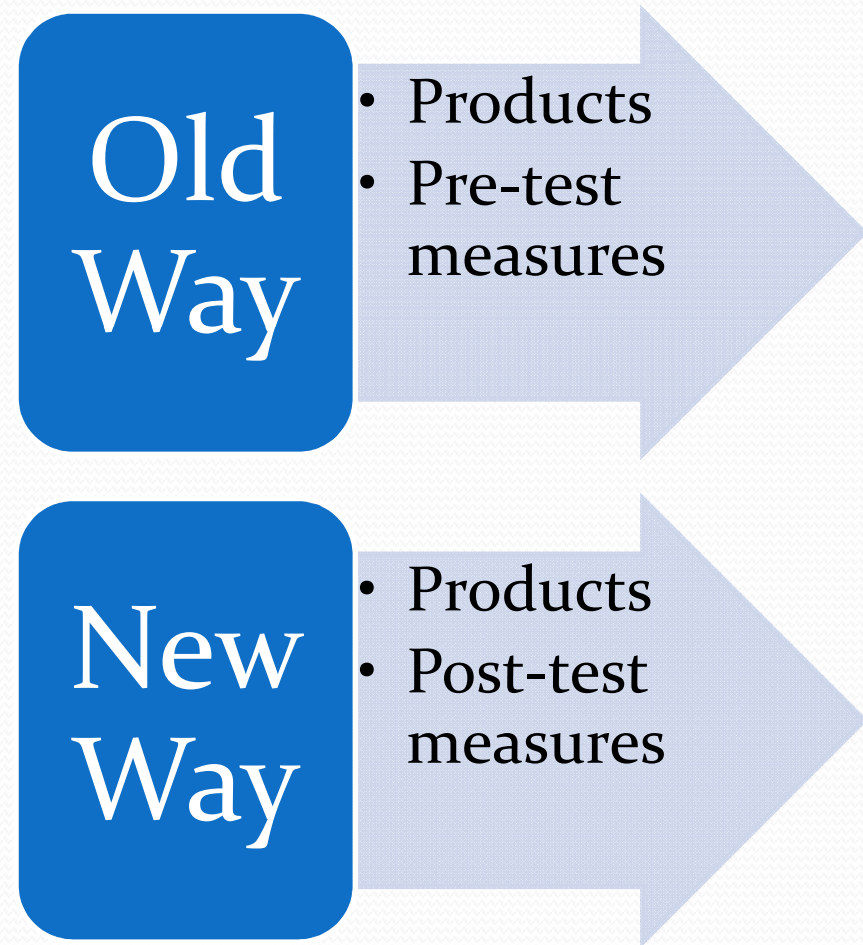
7. Test Internally

- Internal test to “dry run” application of the new process before the old process is removed
 - Can you produce the same results in parallel?
- Analyze:
 - Is the process capable of producing desired results?
 - Is it sustainable?
 - Measure new process vs. old
- If new process does not meet objective, return to Analysis step 5



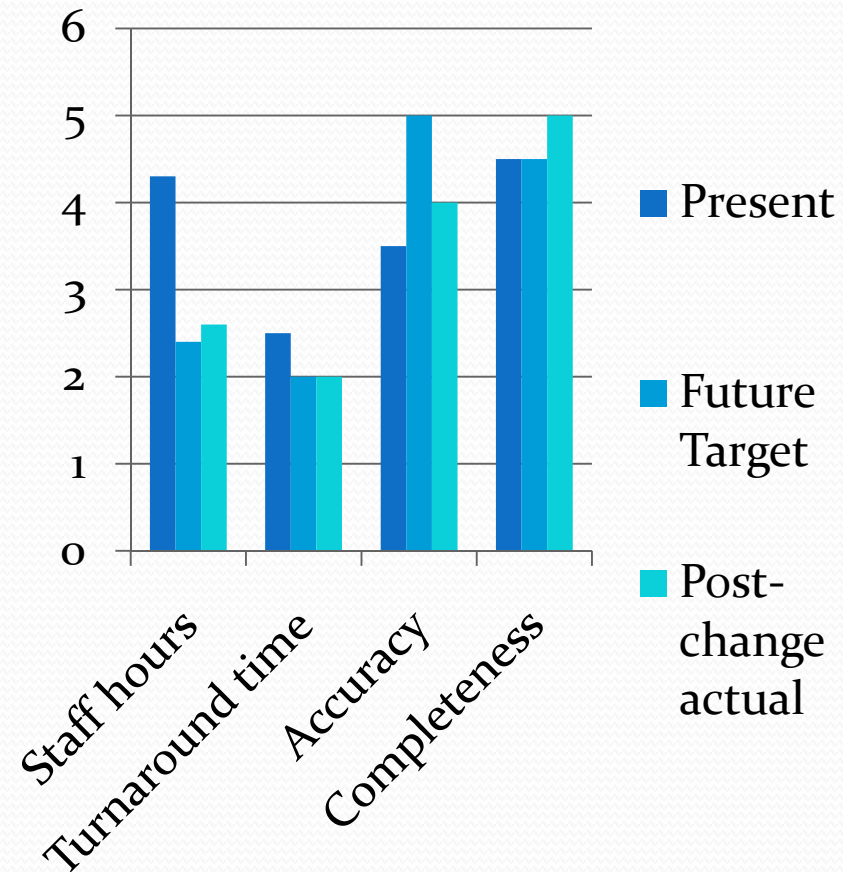
8. Test With Stakeholders

- Let the new process's outputs substitute for the old
- Stakeholders evaluate outcomes
 - Does the process produce desired results?
 - Are improvements evident?
- If new process does not meet objective, return to Analysis step 5



9. Measure and Evaluate

- Apply all measures to new process
- Compare results to intended & “old” measures
- Were targets reached?
- Were improvements made?



10. Implement

- At its simplest, implementation means you discard the old process and adopt the new
- But you also should:
 - Communicate the change to stakeholders
 - Reward / thank staff, stakeholders
 - Document the new process using results of Work Breakdown/Design
 - Repeat: How replicable is this to other processes in / across the agency?

